Tacoma Dome Link Extension

November 2019 outreach summary

Overview

Sound Transit's Tacoma Dome Link Extension (TDLE) will provide fast, reliable regional light rail connections between Pierce and South King Counties and throughout the region. The project will extend light rail service approximately 10 miles from the Federal Way Transit Center Station (opening 2024) to Tacoma Dome Station by 2030. The extension assumes four stations in the vicinity of South Federal Way, Fife, East Tacoma, and Tacoma Dome. The first phase of work began in 2018 with alternative evaluation, included three rounds of broad public engagement and ongoing stakeholder engagement, and concluded with a Sound Transit Board-identified preferred alternative and alternatives for additional study in summer 2019.

With these alternatives in-hand, the technical team has been progressing design and environmental review in readiness of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) publication in 2021. In November 2019, the team conducted corridor-wide outreach to share the latest updates to the route and station alternatives with project neighbors. A companion project, Operations and Maintenance Facility (OMF) South also conducted a simultaneous outreach period.

More than 1,575 users participated in an online open house from Nov. 13 – Dec. 6

More than 350 people attended drop-in sessions in Federal Way, Fife, Kent, and Tacoma

Print and online display advertisements placed in **11** local publications

More than 59,000 mailers sent to homes, apartments and businesses along the project corridor

20+ forms of input gathered from in-person and online comment forms

Posters distributed to **106** different locations throughout Federal Way, Fife, Milton, Tacoma and Puyallup Tribe areas

Three project email updates sent to more than **6,200** recipients on South Sound email lists

Notification toolkits sent to **12** local organizations to share with their constituents and members

Over 5,000 impressions and engagements on Sound Transit's Twitter posts

16,400+ reached on Sound Transit's Facebook posts

Public outreach objectives

During November outreach, the team looked to:

- Explain recent Board action: the Board provided staff direction on alternatives to include and feedback on those that need potential refinements.
- Articulate how past feedback was considered and incorporated and explain how the design has been refined since the public last saw it in Spring 2019.
- Where appliable, gather TDLE station-specific feedback to help move the design forward for incorporation into the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
- Provide context related to Sound Transit's existing service and planned service, and generally how this project fits into regional transit, local and regional comprehensive planning.
- Build an understanding of the project timeline, environmental review process, and opportunities for public involvement.
- Engage communities who may not traditionally participate in the engagement process, including a larger and more diverse audience than during Phase 1.
- Show connection of separate projects for common stakeholders: TDLE to Operations and Maintenance Facility South, and Federal Way Link Extension as needed.

Key themes

The following themes emerged corridor-wide:

- **Commenters asked questions surrounding the property acquisition process and timeline.** Participants wanted to know how this project will affect their homes if they have property within or near an alternative route or station area. Several participants commented that they were unaware of their options if Sound Transit does need to acquire their property, in some cases relating their proximity to future alignments to those already being made ready for Federal Way Link Extension construction.
  "I've noticed shops and buildings being closed North of Lowe's and along 30th Ave. Should I be concerned of the light rail coming through my house? Should I expect a letter from Sound Transit in the future?" (online survey comment)

- **Commenters recognized recent passage of I-976 could impact the project.** Many people related recent headlines to this project, expressing a strong desire for light rail to expand to the South Sound and were concerned that I-976 would affect Sound Transit's ability to deliver the project on time.
  "How will I-976 affect the project timeline and budget? (drop-in session comment)

Themes by station area:

In South Federal Way, commenters:

- Were interested in better transit connections and coordination between different modes and services.
  "*There needs to be meaningful connections to and from light rail and different public transit options or else no one will use them." (drop-in session comment)*

- Recognized the Enchanted Parkway alternative's **potential for transit-oriented development**.
  "SF Enchanted Parkway is the best alternative - maximizes transit-oriented development potential and is also more accessible from SR18." (online survey comment)

In Fife, commenters:

- Questioned the **pros and cons of route alternatives** put forth by Sound Transit.
  "What are the tradeoffs and impacts between the Pacific Highway route versus the I-5 route?" (drop-in session comment)

- Were interested in understanding the environmental impacts of the project.

- Expressed interest in knowing the level of coordination between the City of Fife and the City of Federal Way.

- Supported the "causal drop-in" style approach to outreach.
  "I appreciate your team holding these events at different locations and different times of day, so I have options when it comes to picking which one to go to."(drop-in session comment)

In East Tacoma, commenters:

- Recognized **potential for transit connections** between Link, Amtrak, Sounder, bus services, and light rail.
  "Better coordination and planning between different transit options would make my commute so much easier." (drop-in session comment)

- Expressed interest in the **Portland Avenue** alternative and its pedestrian access improvements.
  "The alternative for spanning Portland Ave. would provide better access for pedestrians to the station from the neighborhood to the south. Portland Ave. is a challenge for pedestrians to cross and this would provide a serious benefit to the most vulnerable user."(online survey comment)

In Tacoma Dome, commenters:

- Expressed interest in and positivity toward the **"Close to Sounder"** station alternative.
  "The close to Sounder alternative would provide the best use of space. There may be property impacts with other alternative for the same area as close to Sounder, but also impacts over the roadway network, proximity to planned apartment complexes, etc. that would be mitigated by designing a new life into Freighthouse Square." (online survey comment)

- Suggested Sound Transit **engage businesses at Freighthouse Square** to mitigate potential impacts, projecting empathy toward these small and emerging businesses.

- Expressed a desire to have **transit-oriented development and integrate this station** into the urban fabric of the area.

Outreach opportunities: In-person and online

Sound Transit advertised the outreach period via various media outlets from Nov. 13- Dec. 6, 2019.

Notifications included:

- Mailer.
- Poster.
- Online and print display ads for South Sound publications (including translated versions in Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese).
- Emails to Sound Transit subscriber lists for the Tacoma Dome Link Extension, Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension, Federal Way Link Extension, and OMF South projects.
- Social media.

- "Notification toolkit" distributed to third-party organizations in the project area for their subsequent sharing.
- In-person field visits to major properties where sites were being considered.
- Briefings to organizations and cities in the project corridor.

In-person drop-in sessions

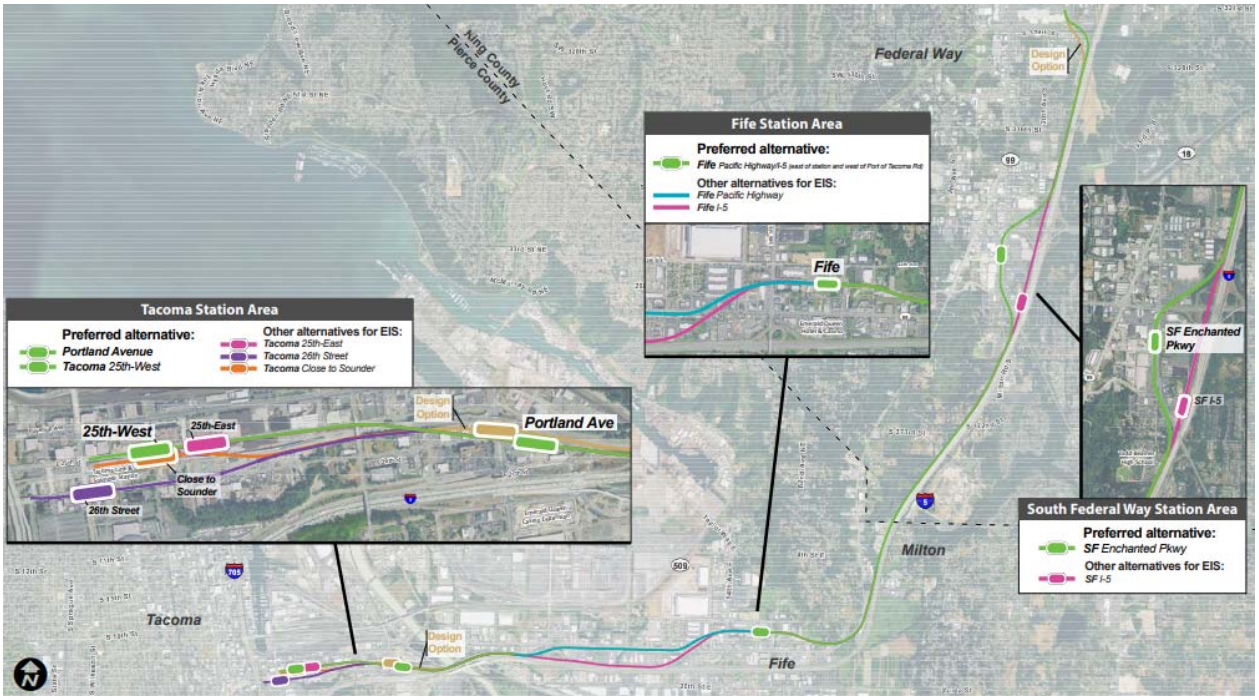
Sound Transit hosted eight TDLE in-person drop-in sessions and three joint TDLE/OMF South drop-in sessions during the outreach period. These drop-in sessions were held during the week and on weekends, and in the morning, afternoon, and evening to provide a variety of options for community members with varying schedules. Project staff were stationed at a project display and large printed maps to answer questions about the route and station alternatives. Representatives from Sound Transit Real Property were on hand to provide information and answer questions about the property acquisition process.

Meeting locations were intended to be accessible for audiences within the project corridor. The meetings took place at the following locations:

Nov. 13 – joint TDLE/OMF drop-in at Highline College

Project staff at a TDLE drop-in session

Nov. 16 – TDLE drop-in at Eastside Community Center
Nov. 16 – joint TDLE/OMF South drop-in at Federal Way Library
Nov. 20 – TDLE drop-in at Evergreen State College, Tacoma
Nov. 20 – joint TDLE/OMF South drop-in at Federal Way Performing Arts Center/ Federal Way Link Extension Open House)
Nov. 20 – TDLE drop-in at Milton Starbucks
Nov. 21 – TDLE drop-in at Poodle Dog
Dec. 3 – TDLE drop-in at UW Tacoma Campus
Dec. 3 – TDLE drop-in at Fife Pierce County Library
Dec. 4 – joint TDLE/OMF South drop-in at Federal Way Community Center
Dec. 4 – TDLE drop-in at Tacoma Sounder Station
Dec. 6 – TDLE drop-in at Salishan Family Investment Center/Holiday Bazaar



Map of project corridor

Online open house (tdlink.participate.online)

An online open house was available 24/7 from Nov. 13 – Dec. 6 and gave the public an opportunity to review route and station alternatives for the four station areas. The website featured station plan layouts and visualizations for each station area, which were also available at drop-in sessions. The site also included in-language content, with a landing page translated into Khmer, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese to provide an overview of the content as well as instructions on using Google Translate. Commenting opportunities were available to collect thoughts on the preferred routes and station plans that have been selected for environmental review. Over 1,575 unique users across over 1,720 sessions visited the online open house. The average time spent on the site by each user was approximately 3 minutes and the site was shared 71 times. This is an increase over previous outreach periods where the highest number of shares was 35 times. Visitors arrived at the landing page via the Sound Transit website, project email updates, online display ads from South Sound publications, and social media.

Audience

The outreach effort during the outreach period included a broad audience, encompassing community groups, organizations, residents, businesses, and underrepresented populations along the project corridor with the overall goal of equitably engaging potential future riders and those who may be impacted by construction.

Sound Transit is committed to equal engagement opportunities for all interested members of the public. In addition to Sound Transit community engagement procedures, Executive Order 12898, U.S. Department of Transportation Order 5610.2(a), and FTA Circular C 4703.1 require Sound Transit to provide meaningful opportunities for these groups to engage in the planning process. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin. These directives make environmental justice a part of the decision-making process by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects of Sound Transit's programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations.

Ways to comment

From Nov. 13 – Dec. 6, the public provided comments in the following ways:

- *Online open house survey:* tdlink.participate.online
- *Email:* tdlink@soundtransit.org
- *Phone:* 206-398-5453
- *Drop-in sessions:* verbal feedback provided to staff in person (not counted as individual comments)

Source	Number of comments
Online open house	14
Email and phone	4

Outcomes and next steps

After receiving comments from the public during the November outreach period, Sound Transit compiled a summary of all the comments. Comments will be considered as Sound Transit continues to refine the preferred routes and station designs before the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is published. The preferred route and station alternatives and other alternatives advanced by the Sound Transit Board will be studied and published in a Draft EIS, expected to be issued in 2021. After collecting and considering public input on the Draft EIS, the Sound Transit Board will confirm or modify the preferred alternative for evaluation in a Final EIS. The Final EIS will also respond to comments on the Draft EIS and is scheduled to be published in 2022. After the Final EIS is issued, the Board will select the project to be built. Final design, construction, and testing will take place from 2022 to 2030 with full-service operations beginning in 2030.